"BAPTISMAL REGENERATION."

A REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY; WITH THOUGHTS ON THE DUTY OF THE EVANGELICAL PORTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT THE PRESENT TIME, TOUCHING THE

TOLERATION OF RITUALISM.

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PREFACE.

1. The writer cannot enter upon the following tract, without recording his protest in advance, against the necessity to which he submits, of ignoring to so great an extent a primary law of the Church, as laid down in the VIth Article of Religion; but such has been the course of controversy for a hundred years, that a purely Scriptural argument, whatever might be its issue as towards the purpose now in hand, would be held as inconclusive, if not irrelevant. Were it otherwise, our task would be comparatively easy. We live in hope of a better day, and thank God for some signs of its coming.

2. Nothing is more common than for the advocates of unscriptural theories to denominate their notions of "Church doctrine," "Bible truth," and to array numerous passages as proof-texts, which are subjected to a forced construction, or being figurative are made to give a literal one, and which then can yield only a most attenuated and inferential support to such theories.

Speculations outside of Scripture, can be satisfactory only as towards counter speculations of the same sort. But any speculation is better than a bold quotation of Scripture in support of false doctrine, which is alike injurious to the morals of controversy, and obnoxious to the curse denounced at the close of the Revelation.

SUGGESTIONS, ETC.

1. No commendation or censure is intended by the names applied in this tract to the different sections or schools in the Church. They are used simply for distinctness and brevity.

2. The progress of error, with its corresponding intensity of strife, is not to be viewed with indifference. There is a growing and ominous repulsion of parties, which calls aloud upon conservative men, of whatever side, to consider this question—*What is the* CAUSE *of such persistent conflict in the Episcopal Church?*—more radical and more lasting than in any of the Churches of the Reformation?

There ought to be discernment enough to *see* it, candor enough to *confess* it, and courage enough to *remove* it; or, if this be found at present impracticable, at least to avow the unalterable *purpose* of its removal. Some tell us that the cause of all this trouble is to be found in erroneous views of *justification*. But whence those views in a Church whose doctrine of justification is too explicit for dispute? Others tell us that it is in the claim of exclusive validity for Episcopal Orders which constitutes technical High-Churchism. It is *this*, say they, which, by logical sequence, ends in false doctrine, and hence the struggle. But the same errors are found among Lutherans and German Reformed, who attach no importance to Episcopacy. It will be found by tracing up the principal streams of controversy, that as between Rome and the Reformation, so among the different parties in the Reformed Churches themselves, the *chief* cause of dispute and separation has been the sacraments. In the Church of England, *during* the Reformation, the Lord's Supper was the doctrine around which the storm of controversy chiefly raged, and as a consequence, the Protestant standard was fixed beyond the possibility of honest use in a Romish sense. Unfortunately, it was not so with the Baptismal service, which, *since* the Reformation, has given chief handle to those who were dissatisfied with the Articles.

This was true, to some extent, from the Restoration up to the time of the great revival in the Church of England, which began in the last century, and which apparently proved the occasion of aggravating the contest over this service, which developed on the one side into Tractarianism (which soon passed on to contend chiefly

for the old Romish views of the Communion), and on the other, into the position of the Evangelical party, as we now see it. The indisputable fact that the Baptismal service has been interpreted in many and contradictory senses by the ablest writers of the Church: some of them in palpable contradiction to the Articles, especially that upon Justification (which, though having a different office from Regeneration, and separable from it in the order of nature, cannot be in the order of time), must be received in evidence of the *special liability* of this service to such diverse and hostile interpretations.

These interpretations touch the life-principles of Christianity, and inasmuch as there have always been men in the Church whose religious convictions and experiences find expression in the *Articles*, and in the offices as interpreted in harmony with the Articles, and not otherwise, while there were also those who, on various grounds, would be sure to reject such interpretation, if any other could be found, the struggle continued, and was morally certain from the start.

In the judgment of the present writer, the generative error, the causa causans of the present state of affairs, is to be found in the *Baptismal service for infants*—a service more likely from the beginning to have a wrong interpretation put upon it than the right one. It is this which has deranged our Theology, set parties in motion, and in the minds of thousands, has obscured the way of salvation. It is saying no more than what everybody believes, to say that so long as this cause continues, this effect will follow, and peace will be a stranger to the Episcopal Church.

If no better understanding can be had as to the true meaning of this service either as between the High and Low-Church parties, or even as between the different members of each among themselves, it is either highly discreditable to both, or an overwhelming argument for revision.

3. Of this service some seven intelligible theories have been propounded and each contended for as the *true* theory, and the *only* true theory, so plain that none need err, and this to the great scandal and amazement of the advocates of the other six.*

* The late Bishop H. U. Onderdonk held the theory of *two* regenerations, totally distinct in nature and ordinarily in time, the first "baptismal" (called also spiritual because all things pertaining to the Church are said to be done by the Spirit), the second "moral." His tract is among the many curiosities of the Baptismal literature. With more than his usual acuteness and logical force he annihilates the theory most commonly held by his own party, marked below as II. Bishop O. proves most conclusively that "the distinction between regeneration and renovation made in the Seed theory is factitious." But aside from his views of progressive justification found in this tract, and his passing unnoticed the whole of the baptismal service preceding the act of baptism, his theory might be considered harmless, were it not (as he justly remarks of another theory) for the bearing it has upon the interpretation of many Scriptures and its liability to be extended into matters of practical theology.

I. *The* Opus Operatum *theory, viz.: in virtue of the act of Baptism every child undergoes that spiritual change on which salvation depends, irrespective of the spiritual state of any of the parties concerned.*

Remarks. This is the baldest view of Baptismal regeneration, and has at least the benefit of being easily understood. And although with the exception of the Bishop of Exeter and a few more of the bolder sort it is avowed by no party in *terms*, it is virtually held by no inconsiderable number. What, *e. g.*, is the difference between this and Dean Comber, a great authority, with high Churchmen? (Vide Brownell on Prayer-book.) "Our corrupt nature," he says, "is changed in baptism and there is renovation effected thereby both as to the mortification of the old affections and the quickening of the new by the Holy Spirit which is hereby given to all who put no bar" (the Romish Obex) "in the way," and this *bar* it is contended further that infants cannot put in the way. Bishop Seabury (Brownell on the Prayer-book, p. 421) ascribes to baptism "remission of sins" and "everlasting life." The opus operatum theory is that apparently held also by the Ritualists, though it is doubtful whether their notions as a party have attained to such coherence as to render them chargeable with any particular theory.

II. *The* Seed of Grace *theory, viz.: every child receives in Baptism such a seed—or germ of the new life. This germ may perish by neglect, or by proper culture be so developed that nothing properly called renovation or conversion need necessarily take place thereafter in order to eternal life.*

Remarks. This is the theory now commonly held by High-Churchmen. They claim that this is the literal and obvious sense of the service, and charge Low-Churchmen with making up a theory contrary to the plain meaning of the words. But do not they themselves begin by "making up a theory" as remote as possible from the *natural* sense of the service?

Will one of them pretend that the service itself would ever suggest the smallest inkling of their theory of a "seed of grace," or "germ of the new life" to one who had never heard of it before?

There never was a theory more artificially and non-naturally forced upon a service than this "seed of grace" theory is forced upon the baptismal service by High-Churchmen. But this is not all. In order to escape the testimony of observation and common sense, they are obliged to wrest the meaning of the word *regeneration*, and its equivalent, *born again*, from its true meaning as used by Christ. The case is thus stated by Procter on the Common Prayer (page 373, note), quoting, as I observe, almost verbatim from Nicholls:—

"Regeneration is the ecclesiastical term applied to the grace re-

ceived in Baptism. It is taken from Titus, iii. 5: *διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας*. In the language of Christian antiquity, the Latin word *Regeneratio*, and the Greek words *ἀναγεννησις*, *ἀνακαινισμὸς*, *ἀνάκτισις*, *μεταβολή*, *ἀνάνεωσις*, *μεταποίησις*, *πάλιντοκία*, *παλιγγενεσία*, constantly signify the participation and the effects of the sacrament of baptism. The term used to express a returning to God after a state of sin, is *μετάνοια*, *conversio*. Both the schoolmen and the most eminent divines of the Reformation use these words in their ancient sense. *Regeneratio* and *conversio* are sometimes used as convertible terms by Calvin, as they were afterwards at the Synod of Dort. But even at that period the words retained their distinct meaning in exact writing. In the sermons and books written about the beginning of the Rebellion, regeneration came into common use for repentance and conversion; and from the Puritans this improper use of the word passed to other writers, so much so that at the revision of 1661 some found fault with the Prayer-book for retaining the word 'regeneration' in its original sense, which it had kept for sixteen centuries in opposition to their novel signification."

Now this is most extraordinary in a work for which such authority is claimed. It is plainly contrary—

1. To *Scripture*. The word "regeneration" occurs but once (Titus, iii. 5—"The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,") where it could possibly refer to baptism, and it is coming to be more and more doubted whether this should not be interpreted as in Matthew iii. 11. "*Baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire*," where not two things are meant, but one and the same—no uncommon form of expression in Scripture. But granting the author's interpretation of the passage, which, it appears, the Fathers took for granted must be its meaning, it makes nothing to his purpose. So, also, with regard to the famous passage, "*Born of water and the Spirit*," once generally supposed to refer to baptism, and often taken as the foundation of the most extravagant theories, it is one of those on which an erroneous meaning having been put by the Fathers, subsequent commentators have followed them blindly for ages. In the recently published "Expository Thoughts upon John," by Mr. Ryle, the reader may find the subject fully examined, and a long list of authorities agreeing with the author, who makes it morally probable (to our mind certain) that this passage has no reference whatever to baptism. If it does refer to baptism, then baptism is indispensable to salvation, and the penitent thief was not saved. Our Lord makes no exception, and gives no authority to make exceptions; yet every theorist who contends for the once popular interpretation of this text finds it necessary to submit, along with it, a list of exceptions, which he varies to suit his particular grade of churchmanship or temper for exclusiveness.

But, even upon the old and erroneous interpretation of this passage, it does not sustain Mr. Procter's definition of regeneration. When our Lord said to Nicodemus, "*Except a man be born again* (the exact equivalent of regeneration) *he cannot see the Kingdom of God*," did He mean to say except a man have "a seed of grace," or "the implantation of the germ of the new life," which may or may not come to something, he cannot see the Kingdom of God? *Marvel not that I said unto you ye must have* the "germ of the new life" planted in you. See also 1 Peter i, 23:—"*Being born again*—ἀναγεγεννημένοι, regenerated—*not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, which liveth and abideth forever.*" Is this equivalent to the High-Church notion of regeneration? I John iii, 9:—"*Whosoever is born of God*—γεγεννημενον—*doth not commit sin.*" Is this commonly observed to hold good of baptized children?

2. The High-Church theory of regeneration, as fairly given by Mr. Procter, is contrary to that of the baptismal service itself. Beyond dispute, the regeneration prayed for *before* the baptism, is that which is accompanied with "the forgiveness of sins." Again, "Ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive him, to release him from sin, to sanctify him with the Holy Ghost, to give him the Kingdom of Heaven, and everlasting life," etc. And is all this something short of conversion, and nothing more than a *seed* of grace which *may* germinate, but of which, commonly, nothing more is ever seen? And is this all for which thanks are returned after the baptism? So, also, in the Catechism, the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, which the advocates of baptismal regeneration contend children always receive along with the outward and visible sign, is declared to be, "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" and the things "required of persons to be baptized" (even of children by promise), are "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe," etc. And are we to be told that all this, also, is something different from conversion, and only "the germ of a new life," which may or may not be nurtured into conversion, and all to meet the exigencies of the High-Church theory of baptismal regeneration?

3 If Mr. Procter had been at the pains to examine the Greek words which he copies from Nicholls he would have found that παλιγγενεσία alone occurs in the New Testament; that two words in the New Testament having the same root with two of those, refer unquestionably to what he calls renovation,* and that classical usage, so far as can be ascertained from the large Greek Lexicons (no references being given), does not in one single instance authorize what he says "Chris-

* 1 Pet. 1: 3, 23, Eph. 4: 23.

tian antiquity" means by them, "for sixteen centuries" which at most could not have been over thirteen, and these centuries of doctrinal corruption, and no citations are made to establish even this.*

So far as the *Reformers* and their successors of any authority are concerned, we have the ready means of confuting his statement and to such an extent, as to bring distrust upon whatever of mere assertion this book may contain.

Take two examples, the first from the Homilies. "Such is the power of the Holy Ghost to *regenerate* men, and, as it were, bring them forth anew so that they shall be *nothing like the men they were before.*" Second, from Latimer.—Our *regeneration* cometh from hearing and believing of the word"—and we cannot forbear a third from Bishop Beveridge: "And so particularly our being *regenerate* or made the Sons of God, that as I have observed is wrought in us and for us by the Spirit of God, *but that is given only to those who believe in Christ,*" and so if the reader will look into Mr. Goode's work on baptism and a tract by Rev. D. F. Sprigg he will find at least forty other quotations which it would be easy enough to increase from Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, Bradford, Becon, Jewell, Bucer, Bullinger, the various continental confessions, the Homily for Whitsun-day, Whittaker, Davenant, Usher, Abbott, Lord Bacon, Thomas Jackson, Bishops Taylor, Hopkins and Pearson; Barrow, Mede, Burkett, Tillotson, Stackhouse and Horseley, all directly in the teeth of Mr. Procter's assertion about the word regeneration being limited "to the grace received in baptism" by the writers to whom he refers. That they sometimes use it in connection with baptism is true enough, but to say that they so use it as to make their definition agree with *his*, shows the extent to which prejudice can carry party writers away from the truth. No—so far from the identification of Regeneration with renovation being invented by Puritans, the severance of them was invented by High-Churchmen to meet the exigencies of their new theory of Baptism.†

*In Mozley's Review of the Baptismal Controversy, the reader may find the quotations from the Fathers and their successors, even to the Schoolmen, at full length, which show how reckless was the statement of Mr. Nicholls, which has been so extensively copied and believed by his party down to this day.

† The present holders of this theory doubtless hold it in all honesty. But the process of foisting false doctrines upon the Church has seldom been accomplished in the beginning without a violation of integrity. When those in charge of the "Christian Knowledge Society," determined upon adopting this theory as advocated by Bishop Mant, and published his tract in 1815, there was a secret attempt to alter the phraseology of what had been published for a hundred years, which was incompatible with the teaching of the New Tract, of which the following examples are given as specimens. In Nelson's Festivals and Fasts, the word "regeneration" was changed without notice to "renovation." A Tract of Bishop Bradford's, endorsed in 1810 as "judicious and Scriptural" was soon out of print," and when its reprinting was demanded it appeared without the endorsement. Mr. Biddulph showed the doctrinal contrarity of the new tract to 48 of the Society's previous publications,

III. The ecclesiastical or *change of state* theory, *i. e.*, by baptism the child is brought into a visible covenant relationship to God.

Remarks. This was the theory held by Bishop Hobart. "In the sacrament of baptism we are taken from the world where we had no title to the favor of God and placed in a state of salvation in the Christian Church," etc. "In this sense as it respects a *change of state* baptized persons are *regenerated*," etc.* "Bishop H. limited the idea of regeneration to the merely outward change of a visible covenant effected through water baptism."† But the necessity of an internal change lie fully admitted.

It seems strange to us how he could have imagined that the decisive language of the service meant no more than this, and still more how he could have thought it worth while to keep up such a controversy and war for "Baptismal regeneration" under so meager a notion of it as this—a notion which Low Churchmen though not admitting it to have any countenance from the Prayer-book do not care particularly to deny. His extreme Churchism turned more upon the question of the ministry.

IV. The Charitable Hope Theory, *i. e., in view of the prayers offered and the faith supposed, we are warranted in using the language of the service in the charitable hope that regeneration does actually take place, without pretending to affirm it absolutely of all or of any.*

Remarks. This theory takes the word regeneration in its true sense, and might be harmless enough in itself if it could be at all reconciled with the service. What can charity have to do with the child's positive affirmation in the Catechism made in the past tense of what was actually *done* for him in baptism? This once popular view seems little accounted of at present.

V. The conditional, or Prevenient Grace theory—*i. e., though the terms of the service in most places are general and absolute, yet in some* they are conditioned by the word "*worthily*," *which word must always be supposed, before it can be affirmed positively that the grace signified by Baptism is actually conveyed.*

Remarks. This is the view which was pronounced lawful, by the highest ecclesiastical court of England in the suit instituted by Mr. Gorham against the Bishop of Exeter. The Romish fancy of the

nine of them by Bishops and Archbishops. But it was in vain: remonstrance on the part of an evangelical minority fared as in too many other cases since.

This Seed theory is that advocated in "The Sacrament of Responsibility" (published by the Church Book Society) and "Church doctrine Bible Truth," both by Mr. Sadler. This writer's representation of the views of those whom he opposes is a mere travestie, and that works so subversive of the gospel should find readers and advocates in the Church is one of the lamentable indications of the times.

* Vide Bishop H.'s Sermon, Ti. iii. 6. "Professional Years of Bishop H." pp. 380-1

† Dr. S. H. Turner, Autobiography, p. 95.

obex was totally ignored by the Court. This view also takes the word regeneration in its Scriptural sense. But although not unscriptural and incomparably nearer the intention of the Reformers than that of Bishop Philpotts, it is itself open to exceptions as explanatory of the baptismal service as a whole, which render a settlement of the controversy on this basis by no means probable.

VI. The *Sacramental*, or *typical*, or *figurative*, or *representative* theory—these terms being held as meaning the same thing or explanatory of each other, *i. e.*, baptism has the name of the thing which it signifies. The advocates of this theory explain it most intelligibily thus. We give the bread to a communicant and *call* it the body of our Lord Jesus Christ because it *represents* his body. We give baptism to a child and *call* it regeneration, because it *represents* regeneration.

Remarks. This view also takes the word regeneration in its right sense, is free from all doctrinal unsoundness and relieves the post-baptismal service from an interpretation alike obnoxious to Scripture, observation and common sense. As illustrative and confirmatory of it the following is quoted from Cranmer: "The good eat the body of Christ sacramentally and spiritually, the evil only sacramentally, that is to say, figuratively."

VII. The *hypothetical* theory, *i e., as the profession of faith made by the child previous to its baptism, though made in absolute terms is confessedly a hypothesis, or a thing supposed and not actual and present: so the regeneration declared after the baptism, though in like absolute terms, must also be hypothetical, or in like manner as the faith supposed.*

Remarks. 1. This theory takes the word regeneration in its true sense, and like the Bible and the Prayer-book it links faith and regeneration together, whereas the High-Church theory separates what both the Bible and the baptismal service join together.

2. The High-Churchman admits the faith spoken of in the first part of the service to be the *true* faith and that the profession of it made by the child, is not actually, but only hypothetically made, or supposed to be made. (That it is the *child* that makes the profession, and not the sponsor, is admitted by all the authorities upon the subject. Vide Wheatley.) Therefore he is compelled to adopt the hypothetical theory for one-half the service, but manufactures a totally different one for the other half. That is, he admits the first part of the service to be constructed upon this theory, but stops short in the middle and insists that the remainder shall be taken absolutely, and the regeneration accounted a present reality, at the same time letting down the sense of the word regeneration to something of which Scripture says not one word.

3. The hypothetical theory professes no "charitable persuasion" whatever. It does not admit that children may *sometimes* be regenerated in baptism, and it does not deny it. As it antedates the profession of faith, so to the same extent it antedates the regeneration. It makes one a present reality just as much as the other, and no more. When the *one* becomes actual it of course supposes the *other* will; and as to the question whether regeneration *may* not in some cases precede baptism or go along with it, as the holders of this theory *know* nothing, they *say* nothing. It may be observed, however, apart from the argument, that if infants are ever regenerated it is something which nothing but a revelation could prove, and such revelation there is none,—the passages quoted respecting John the Baptist and others, being held by all just criticism as irrelevant to the question. There are interesting speculations touching the manner in which such as die in infancy may become interested in the atonement, but they cannot be made articles of faith to which subscription is to be exacted.

4. Low-Churchmen insist further that as every other service in the Prayer-book is constructed upon the hypothetical principle—or supposition of faith—(even that for adult baptism which the Laudian divines of the Savoy Conference found it impossible to construct on any other theory) that for infant baptism cannot be an exception.

5. The hypothetical theory, and this *alone*, harmonizes all parts of the service, that which goes *before* the act of Baptism, which so generally passes unnoticed, as well as that which follows after it; and all the correlative services which have to be taken with it.

6. It follows from what has been said that the Low-Churchman holds the Prayer-book on this point to stand clear of all complicity with Romish error.*

7. The *opus operatum* theory is in reality the only logical alternative to the hypothetical or Protestant theory. The Bishop of Exeter had the acumen to see this, the candor to acknowledge it,

* In Fisher on the revision of the Liturgy, the author confounds the "charitable hope" with the "hypothetical" theory and confutes what he calls "the charitable hypothesis;" whereas a hypothesis has nothing to do with *charity*. There is no such thing as a "charitable hypothesis." From this confusion arises his unfairness to the Prayer-book; and hence his seeming triumph. The Bishop of Exeter's good opinion of the book is not wonderful as it concedes so much that he finds difficult to prove. But it is due to Mr. Fisher to say that his book is worthy the attention of all parties, which it has to a considerable extent commanded. He is profoundly attached to the Church and most solicitous for its popularity and influence. He says enough to make some of the Low-Churchmen ashamed of their pertinacity in defending any and everything which the Prayer-book may contain and to make all High-Churchmen with anything of the author's intelligent concern for the welfare of the Church willingly concede what he asks, at least for the Baptismal Service, as he proposes neither an affirmation of his own views nor any denial of theirs, but simply the non-saying of that of which Scripture says nothing, and of which nothing is known, and which so long as it continues to be said will continue, as in times past, the source of interminable dissension.

and, it seems, the courage to defend what he conceived to be the truth, though in direct conflict with the decision of his own Church. Let it not for a moment be forgotten that all these intermediate theories are the cumbrous inventions of post-reformational times, have tended only to confusion, and can stand but a short siege before intelligent criticism. The objections to them all (except No. VI, which might safely enough be accepted), are, on one ground or another, fatal.*

If it be said that plausible objections may be raised to the hypothetical view, we answer that they are only plausible—they are not solid. The soundest system of theology may be charged with inconsistencies, either from some incompetency in the workmen or the inadequacy of reason to logical completeness. To silence all cavil is something which no defender of truth expects. He must be satisfied with being serviceable to such as are free from prejudice. In this connection it may be observed that quotations are made from Cranmer which, taken literally, teach not indeed the common High-Church theory—which is comparatively modern—but the naked *opus operatum*. But these are neutralized by others quite opposite, which prove that the first were figurative expressions, giving the names of things signified to the things which they signify—a manner of speaking common to all languages. Figurative language, which is employed by the Divine wisdom, will never lead to error where proper care is taken, but is a powerful aid to the conveyance and impression of truth. But such language can manifestly have no place in human creeds, confessions, or symbols, since their object is to define, by the most categorical terms, the sense in which the parties subscribing them understand the figurative as well as other language of Scripture. Therefore, the figurative expressions which occur in the sacramental services cannot be appealed to to determine the faith of the Church, for they were never intended to be so used.

But if in the case of the Reformers some inconsistencies should be found which are more than apparent, must not all candor admit that they were advancing to clearer and clearer views of Divine truth—certainly to better modes of expressing them up to the day of their death? And, certainly, we should be most unworthy descendants of such a

* If the reader will look into Mozley's "Review of the Baptismal Controversy," he will there find it proved by authorities and arguments which would seem to put it beyond any further possibility of honest dispute, that if all the baptismal offices and catechisms of the Reformation had not been constructed upon the hypothetical principle (Mr. M. contents himself by saying "open" to this principle of interpretation), they could not have been subscribed by the very men who made them, or by the great names of the Church for a hundred years afterwards—Hooker included. He will there find also an exposure of the refinements and evasions by which it has been sought to reconcile the theology of Augustine with the dogmatic statement that all infants are regenerated in baptism. That theology was and still is tolerated in the Church of Rome, and it would be useless to conduct an argument with one who denies that this was the theology of the Reformers.

spiritual parentage if we should stop precisely where they stopped, *because* they stopped there.

The sacramental darkness had set in with the Fathers. It had been extended and deepened on every side by Rome. It was a darkness which men loved, and was it to be expected that a single generation should have cleared it at a bound, and that no expressions could be found in cotemporaries of the schoolmen which errorists would love to quote?

We believe it entirely susceptible of proof on independent grounds, *i. e.*, from what the Reformers wrote upon baptism itself when cleared of figurative and typical language, that their doctrine was substantially the same as that advocated in this tract; but when it comes to be taken in connection with their general theology the proof is overwhelming. It is certainly so as toward any theory held by High-Churchmen. Look at the *Articles*, and how are they to be interpreted? *Ex animo imponentis*, *i. e.*, in the sense of the legislature of the 13th of Elizabeth, which enacted them as statute laws of England. But what was that sense? It is not to be presumed that Parliament had any sense of its own. It was the sense of the *Church* which submitted them in 1571, when Parker was Primate; and what *that* sense was, whether taken from the literal and grammatical construction of the Articles themselves, or from the voluminous theological writings of the English Reformers, it is in no way difficult to determine. The party which prepared the baptismal service also prepared the Articles, and prepared them *last*. They must have *intended* both to teach the same doctrine. But one has figurative language by common consent; the others are in the most literal and dialectic terms which it was possible to select. Which shall interpret? The figurative the literal, or the literal the figurative—the Baptismal Office the Articles, or the Articles the Baptismal Office? There can be but one answer.

The baptismal service, then, can be vindicated from the charge of teaching false doctrine—why, then, should it be revised? This is the question now to be considered:—*Ought the Baptismal Service for Infants to be revised?* and if so, for what reasons?* We answer:

1. That though the theory upon which it is constructed is hypothetical, its *terms* are affirmative. "I *do* believe," etc.; "I *do* renounce the devil," etc.; "This child *is* regenerate," etc.

2. It is never for a moment to be forgotten that the Scriptures are

*Few readers are probably aware how large a number of the wisest and most useful men which the Church has produced have advocated a revision of this service. Bishop Meade's opinion may be found in full in the "Memorial Papers," and a catalogue of living authorities might readily be obtained which would command respect. In examining a copy of the "Proposed Book," the writer finds that from the sentence which now reads, "Seeing now that this child is regenerate," etc., the word *regenerate* is omitted.

absolutely silent upon the question of the moral *effects* of baptism upon infants. And it is observable that the more silent they are the more noisy the advocates of baptismal regeneration become. Scripture does not say in so many words that infants are to be baptized at all. Infant baptism is taught *inferentially;* it is the antitype of circumcision. The children of the members of the Gospel Church cannot be supposed to be less connected with it than the children of Jews with the Jewish Church. Added to this, is the possibility or probability of children in the "house" of the Jailor, and of Lydia, and of Stephanas. These are not, indeed, all the arguments from Scripture for baptizing infants, but there are none stronger. They are conclusive so far as to justify the Church in its doctrine and practice respecting the *fact*. But we must stop there. The further fact that God has given us no light as to the inward and spiritual effects—or whether there be any at all—should restrain the Church from propounding any theory or doctrine respecting it whatsoever.

According to the view taken in this tract, the Church of England has not undertaken to pronounce that there is any spiritual effect inseparable from baptism; but,

It has adopted a baptismal service, concerning which two very extraordinary facts are notorious: (1.) This service is received not only without scruple, but with exultation by those who repudiate Protestantism—even those, who, like a Dr. Littledale, are so lost to all shame as to traduce the Reformers, and side in the quarrel with their murderers. (2.) To a great and growing number of those who venerate those holy men, and maintain in this age the very life principles of their work, this service is a grief, and burden, a stumbling-block, and rock of offense. And he reads the signs of the times amiss who does not see that this number is bound to increase. The burden will become more and more intolerable in proportion as a vigorous and healthy conscience comes to take knowledge of the fact, not only that this service *is* misunderstood, but of the moral certainty that it will *continue* to be misunderstood, because of the utter impracticability of acquainting the people (to say nothing of the clergy) with the protracted historical and theological argument, which the lapse of time has made necessary in order to establish its intended and consistent meaning against plausible perversions.

3. The error of taking a child's *faith* and *profession* to be a reality instead of a hypothesis, is palpable, corrected by the senses, and cures itself. Not so with the regeneration affirmed. Strange and perverse as it may seem, this *is*, *has been*, and will *continue* to be *separated* from the correlative hypothesis of faith, which goes immediately before, and on which it depends; and it will continue

to be insisted, that the words "this child *is* regenerate," shall be taken in their "natural sense" apart from anything which goes before, and those who take them as *conditioned* by what goes before, will be charged with taking them in a *non*-natural sense, and as guilty of the sin of the author of Tract No. 90; while not only the unlearned and scoffers, but those with such knowledge of the subject as Mr. Macauley, will join in the charge.

Nor is this all: thousands of High-Churchmen (the majority, for aught we know), sincerely think this service to teach what they believe.

4. While insisting, then, that the Protestant and Scriptural orthodoxy of the service can be defended against all comers,* it is too

* The ablest vindication of the Protestantism of the service (at least as against any theory held by High-Churchmen) which we have seen, is in a tract (pp. 91, 1860), by Rev. D. F. Sprigg, in reply to one (pp. 104, 1860), by Bishop Whittingham. The Bishop fights vigorously in the dark: giving no definition of terms, or telling what he *means* by Baptismal Regeneration. The proposition on which he labors is "Latimer taught 'Baptismal Regeneration;'" but in which one of its half a dozen senses does not appear. No Evangelical man who has read the two pamphlets, would hesitate to abide the verdict of any jury taken outside the Episcopal Church, as to which of the disputants succeeded entirely, not only upon the particular point, but in the general issue, and which as entirely failed.

And in this connection, we refer to a tract of Rev. G. W. Ridgely (pp. 144, 18mo, 1844), in reply to an assault upon the Church by Rev. Albert Barnes. After a somewhat extensive acquaintance with this kind of literature, we are of opinion that on their respective subjects, there are no tracts extant to compare with these two, and that the Evangelical Knowledge Society would render a most useful and popular service to the Church, by procuring their revision by their authors, and publishing them. Both these tracts are models of controversy; they do not contain a single disrespectful word of their opponents.

Since the MS. of this essay was completed, we found in our collection the tract, of Bishop McIlvaine, entitled, *Some thoughts upon Baptismal Regeneration.* The reader will thank us for the following extract:—

"Had there been an equal definiteness on the other side, a consistent keeping to the inquiry concerning that one spiritual regeneration and no other, how would the 'making of many books' about it have been saved; how many seeming triumphs of argument would have been lost; how many apparent issues avoided, with a variety of obscurities and misconceptions. But when, under the one name of Baptismal Regeneration, they have contended, sometimes for a Regeneration involving no spiritual renewal, and sometimes for one that does; one while, for a mere external exchange of relative state, at another for some change or other, of inward and spiritual dispositions; now, as if the change were prospective, conditioned on the fulfillment of covenant promises; then, as if it were present and actual; in one writer, a something pertaining alike to adults and infants, whatever the spiritual preparation of the former; in another, a change which, while universal in the case of infants, depends in adults on some preparatory qualification of mind; when the holders of these several and widely divergent views appeal alike to precisely the same authority of Scripture, Fathers, Reformers, and Church Formularies, calling their various views by the same general name, and all regarding one another as still of one school, and as having the one exclusive Scriptural, Patristic, Reformational, and Liturgical doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, while they differ as much with one another as some of them do from us, and their chief harmony is their common antagonism, explain it as we may, to that aspect of spiritual regeneration, and its evidences, on which *we* are so united—when all this is the case, none can marvel if the main question between us be left as much in the wilderness as ever; or that when we sometimes think we have made our cause

plain to be denied that the *wisdom* of constructing a baptismal service on a plan liable to a history of two hundred years, such as this has had, cannot be defended.

The *supposition* of faith in an infant, and the device of its making a *profession* through a SPONSOR, are where the trouble begins. In the first Prayer-book of King Edward, the questions were addressed directly to the infant, the Sponsor only standing by and answering as the infant's mouth-piece. And the true theory of the service would have been less liable to misconception had this continued.* But though the minister was afterwards directed to speak to the Sponsors (to avoid the absurdity of questioning an infant) yet the Sponsor was and is still supposed to convey the *child's* answer, not his own. (See the authorities, also the exhortation to the Sponsors to remind the child—"What a solemn vow, promise and profession *he* hath here made by you.") This Sponsorial substitution in the profession of everything which distinguishes a child of God has no shadow of authorization from Scripture. The obscurity in which it involves the service is to many minds impenetrable. Even the disputants themselves cannot see each other in the *fog*, one crying that the path through it is here and another that it is there.

The reasons assigned in defense of Sponsors are weak and irrelevant. What rationality can there be in a profession so made?

against them, we are told complacently, by some of them, that we have been arguing against a Baptismal Regeneration which nobody maintains."

We find also the following note appended to the Bishop's Tract, respecting the essay of Mr. Sprigg, alluded to above, which, we trust, may further contribute to procure its republication:—

"The editor of the *Southern Churchman* has issued a most searching and admirable examination of the doctrine of the Reformers, in a closely printed and most carefully prepared pamphlet of a hundred pages, entitled 'The Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration as held by Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, and as taught in the Book of Common Prayer. A Discussion between Bishop Whittingham and the *Southern Churchman*.' The best spirit breathes throughout the work. Never had the Reformers been examined and cross-examined with more fairness, discrimination, faithfulness, fullness, clearness, vigor. The acumen of the writer appears to great advantage. He has evidently brought out the truth. He has brought it out so into 'the open,' that none can help seeing it, who will take the pains to look. The pamphlet ought to be put in permanent form and sent throughout the Church. Candidates for orders should well digest it. We are thankful for the letters to the *Southern Churchman* which drew out such an answer."

The principal clue to Bishop W.'s own opinion, after a hundred pages, is in his reference to a tract by Mr. Sadler, entitled, "The Sacrament of Responsibility," which he thinks it very difficult to answer, as it doubtless would be, to his satisfaction, since between the author of that tract and Evangelical writers, there seems to be no basis common to both, on which satisfactory results could be reached. But we must resist the temptation to proceed further, or this note will never end.

*So far as the question of *interpretation* is concerned, it is of no importance whether the infant or the Sponsor be questioned, since in either case literal and positive terms must be interpreted hypothetically, and are so interpreted by all parties. The infant is incapable of the affections supposed, and no one imagines that a really vicarious act is performed in the Sponsor's belief, renunciation of the world and desire for baptism, as it is not possible for one to believe and desire in another's stead.

The Fathers appear to give different accounts of the origin of this office, some tracing it to something supposed to be similar among the Jews. Others say that Sponsors were first employed for foundlings. Others contend that this is a relationship which man may create and hold similar to that of secular guardians to their wards. But all this is manifestly inconclusive, nothing is assigned or can be to justify this arbitrary Sponsorial substitution in spiritual things—the most intimate of all, and which only can pass between God and the secret soul.

All religious obligations for a child warranted by Scripture or reason should be undertaken by *parents*, being communicants of the Church, or by those who are foster parents standing actually *in loco parentis* being also communicants as required by the English rubric and as should have been by ours. But as ordinarily conducted we know what painful doubts are suffered by the most conscientious persons about engagements so solemn which they foresee there will be no opportunity to fulfill; and which they can but observe there is commonly no serious *intention* of performing. How much better it would have proved for the Church had the Reformers pleaded this also in the catalogue of things to be omitted. It is the hypothetical character of the whole service which alone can be pleaded in its defense. This indeed saves its orthodoxy in the theology involved, but not its wisdom. When the Reformation was resumed, or rather when the attempt was made to resume it, under Elizabeth, the wisest of the Bishops saw this stumbling-block, and would have removed it but for an able, arbitrary and unregenerate Queen. What thanks do we owe to God that a half reformed and willful woman in such authority and at such a time did not prove a much greater hindrance.

"We receive," said Archbishop Grindal (1567) "or rather tolerate until the Lord shall give us better times, the interrogations to infants," etc. "We publicly profess and diligently teach that questions of this kind are not very suitable to be proposed to them, notwithstanding they seem to be borrowed from Augustine."

But alas! "the times" grew worse instead of better, and it is only of late years that any considerable number have reached the ground occupied by Grindal.

The more we read of the earlier Protestant Catechisms, confessions and offices touching baptism, and the tedious disputations to which they have given rise, the more fully are we satisfied that their authors intended nothing incompatible with the evangelical faith as now received, but at the same time we are just as fully satisfied that their *manner* of writing figurative and otherwise was the great practical blunder of the Reformation. Is any other proof of this neces-

sary than the distraction which ensued and which continues to this day without a sign of abatement? Who can read Luther's catechism, or (as a specimen of the continental confessions), "The Form and Order of Baptism" in the Brandenburg Liturgy, or even Calvin, and wonder at the difference which prevails as to what they intended to teach—who can wonder at the copious volumes of Dr. Pusey and Mr. Goode—the tracts, the pamphlets, the newspaper articles, with the endless quotations and counter quotations and exclamation points?

If such accomplished and wary disputants as the Bishop of Exeter have stumbled and been compelled to make retractions, what may be looked for from lesser lights? Lutheranism started with the unintelligible absurdity of consubstantiation, which centuries of controversy have not eliminated from German theology; but it may be doubted whether less evil has not resulted from this *real* error, slumbering in a confession seen only by the clergy, and not often by them, than from a baptismal service which though sound, yet from its structure is *suggestive* of error, this service being constantly before the people. If any thing was ever proved by experiment it is proved to us that so long as the categorical statement remains "this child *is* regenerate," no matter what conditions may be proved to belong to it, error will continue as in times past to chrystalize around that sentence, misunderstandings will continue; no explanations will be satisfactory; disputants will not be content with what their predecessors have done,—no truce will be observed and no concordat will be lasting. Joshuas may be sent, as ever and anon by God's mercy they have been sent, but errorists still remain and will continue in the Church. They are like the Canaanites in the inheritance of Manasseh, of whom it is said, "they *would* dwell in that land."

How then is it possible to avoid the conclusion that *this service ought to be changed, and that it is the duty of every evangelical man to join in any lawful and conservative effort to procure its alteration*—an alteration which shall free it from any affirmation of a spiritual change effected by baptism, whether hypothetical as conditioned by a supposed previous profession of faith, or otherwise. None ought to stand aloof from their brethren and say they "have never had any difficulty with this service," when if their numerous explanations and disputes do not prove the contrary, they must see what *others* suffer from it whose consciences are as tender as their own, and on this particular subject more enlightened. Is this a hard saying? Writers upon morals inform us that if we use words in one sense, though the correct one, knowing that those to whom they are addressed understand them in another sense, we are wanting in veracity. This timid, unilluminated conservatism, which backs its

unwieldy weight against all change, is in direct contrast with the conduct of the greatest benefactors of the Church. Look at the Reformers—their courage, their heroic confidence in God and in truth. Nay, look at the *Fathers*, whose example in adhering to what they believed to be the truth through all sorts of persecution, reproves us. When heresy availed itself of ambiguity in the Creed touching our Lord's divinity, did they hold on to the imperfect document, and content themselves with quarreling for a "Catholic" interpretation? No—they revised and revised again, from Apostolic to Nicene, and from Nicene to Athanasian, and demanded subscription to the corrected copy, which was not in "Bible terms," about the *sense* of which terms it was that the controversy raged, but in categorical statements which detected the perversion of Bible terms, by which Arianism had tormented the Church down to the day in which they lived. Nor is the conduct of these Fathers when in a *minority* less instructive to us. It is this unreasoning conservatism which is to a considerable extent responsible for the liberty which error takes, and for the radical measures which have at last to be resorted to for its removal.

It would be a most happy thing if it could be universally understood that evangelical men, one and all,—taking the ground that they have quarrelled over this service long enough,—could go for its revision, and as a point of high expedience make it part and parcel of the platform. Not that we deem it necessary to get up a special party organization like the "Church Union." There may be a thorough understanding both among ourselves and as toward all others, if we are agreed and choose to have such understanding.

The methods deemed most suitable for obtaining it should be entered upon with the calmness of men who know their ground, and with the patience which looks to having the contest transmitted if need should be from generation to generation, and with a courage, a certainty of right and a consciousness of power which assures a final victory.

6. *Present Failure to obtain this*, or kindred improvements in our Church system, [for certainly there is no immediate prospect of success] *should be held as no just cause for separation.*

It is said there is a large number—clergy and laity—who are resolved on a redress of grievances or secession. To what extent this is true, the writer is not in a position to judge. But what are these grievances? The service under consideration, with some others less objectionable, and the toleration of flagrant Romanism in the Church. Take the last first, as it has probably most influence of the two, aggravated as it is by the scandalous abuse of discipline in the Diocese of New York when the *Commission* there is compared

with the *Omission*. Such official delinquency is to be palliated in no degree. But let the aggrieved know that the offense scarce exceeds the indignation which it has awakened, and the judgment of history which will surely be its punishment. But let them also know that schism is not the remedy. Moreover the relief hoped for from it is neither needed nor worth having. If unjustly excluded by a majority from communion with that majority, then such majority have separated themselves from the Constitution to which both parties were pledged. The minority is not responsible, nor their status altered. If evangelical men, from being in a minority, are without power to enforce the discipline of the Church upon the betrayers of its doctrine, neither then are they responsible. Their protest clears them from complicity with the evil before God and man; and so long as no sinful terms of communion are imposed, their duty is to remain where they are in a Church which is theirs by inheritance; for that they and not their opponents are the true spiritual descendants of the Reformers and founders of this Church as Protestant, they may safely leave to the judgment of the whole Christian world, Roman Catholics included.

7. With respect to error in the Baptismal service, supposed or real, relief may be had not only without separation but to a great extent without revision. How? We have been told, even by an oracle of political wisdom, that "error may be tolerated if reason be left free to combat it." And have we not the largest liberty for the confutation of error and the defense of truth, as we ourselves understand error and truth? Look at this tract—would such freedom with error as is herein exercised be tolerated in a minority in the Roman Church? But furthermore and *especially*—if the Evangelical party will agree upon and set forth a declaration touching this baptismal service for infants, vindicating its Protestant orthodoxy, but at the same time protesting against the false doctrines which are professedly though erroneously derived from it and avowing its purpose to employ all lawful means to procure its revision—*this alone will bring substantial relief, and bring it at once.* This is a relief which no power can hinder if Evangelical men as a body choose to avail themselves of it. By such act and testimony they will at once stand clear of that which they most wish to avoid, and this "burden" need no longer lay upon the conscience.

The writer took care to relieve *his own* long since by taking the position of this essay before his congregation.

It is our ardent prayer to Him who is Head over all things in the Church, that He will not suffer the thought of division to be entertained among us, or lay upon us the affliction of schism, though we ourselves should be adjudged free from the *sin* of it. Certainly no-

thing thus far has taken place to render it necessary. Some seem unduly discouraged by the progress of Ritualism, but this is no strange thing in Church history. Time was when Arianism had the ascendency in the Catholic Church, and the most orthodox Christian communities have not been free from seasons of heretical declension, while these were overruled in the end for a wider extension of the truth. It has been so upon the Continent, yet Consubstantiation is dying out of Lutheranism. The Reformed, also, in both French and German-Switzerland, adopted a sacramental theory not now held by their successors, or likely ever to be restored among them, notwithstanding the occasional reactions which go far beyond any Protestant sacramental theory of the sixteenth century. So, also, in England, there have been periods of backsliding; the most protracted and disastrous, beginning under Laud, culminated in the Revolution of 1688, during which period, in the miserable times of Charles II, men of a worldly spirit, such as Gunning and Sheldon and Morley, coming into power, burning with political resentments as well as with religious animosity—men in almost every respect unfitted for the sacred task —had the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

Yet, notwithstanding this, and the outbreak of Tractarianism and Ritualism in our own day, the general progress and tendency of things in the Church has been towards the elucidation and establishment of Evangelical truth.

How is it at the present time? *Numbers* are on one side, but the moral power of the Church is on the other. Besides, the show of *numbers* is to a considerable extent deceptive. The entire evangelical membership in many Dioceses—New York among them—counts for *nothing* in Diocesan or General Conventions. The legislation of the Church knows them not. But missions feel them as the superior force—a fact which the wise are beginning to understand. Circumstances, moreover, have caused multitudes of the laity to be counted among High-Churchmen who believe neither in baptismal regeneration nor the exclusive validity of Episcopal orders, and who may yet have the opportunity of saying so. And so, to a less extent, of the clergy. It is the writer's sincere and grateful conviction that not a few High-Churchmen (so-styled) are sound in the faith according to the standard of soundness which he receives. They believe in neither of these dogmas, though enrolled and mustered under those who do. Certainly we have met with such who, upon giving them time, would make their way through much fog to ground which evangelical men of intelligence and catholicity do not care particularly to dispute—men to whom we could give our confidence, and work with without controversy to the end of life. And in this connection it is to be admitted, and no apology offered for it, that

some on the other side have by no means in meekness instructed those who opposed themselves, or exhibited the spirit of Him who rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees.

Alas! what injury comes from the prosecution of a noble and righteous cause in the temper of its assailants, as if it were a canon in controversy never to allow an adversary to have a grain of common sense or of common honesty. At the same time, concessions are not to be made which exonorate from responsibility for error.

It is needless, however, to say that this is not a question between men, but between *systems*. For *men* supposed to be in error apologies are always to be considered, and *may* be sufficient, but with the error itself it is different.

Our controversy is with the sacramental and High-Church SYSTEM. There is no truth in it. It is in conflict with Scripture, with experience, with the facts of divine providence and with the interests of Christ's kingdom, and will certainly come to an end.

Such is our solemn conviction, and whatever influence may be exerted by those who entertain it must be exerted in consistency therewith. And is it nothing to be ecclesiastically connected with thousands upon whom such influence may be exerted for good? If it be said that this union is not organic but only mechanical, as wood and iron may be held together by screws, this is true only of a portion. There is a large body of whom it is not true, as sincerely concerned to please God as ourselves, and from whom it is not a small thing to be separated, the parties being those whom God in some sense hath joined together. We have never seen any good answer to what Augustine said to the Donatists, whose greater purity he seemed to admit: "You have no cause to go out of the Catholic Church in order to find holiness, nor can you pretend that you yourselves are free from false members. If you are more pure in doctrine and life than the generality in the Catholic Church, then it not only needs your service but is *entitled* to it; and if the Church founded by the Apostles was still liable to error and backsliding, much more will that be which is founded by you." Quoting from memory we are inclined to think the two last obervations our own, but do not think Augustine would have disclaimed the sentiment. No—while any alliance with Apostate and fallen Churches which were not in the lot of our inheritance is to be resisted to the last, it is a very different thing to divide our own. If there be any who contemplate such a measure, which we must think extremely doubtful, we neither denounce nor reprove them, worn out with offenses as we know them to be, and such offenses as would be endured in no other Church, but we entreat them to consider whether it can be wise or right in them to break away from the

great body of those who are one with them in doctrine and equally aggrieved with themselves, and are laboring as earnestly in the same cause and take a step which it is impossible for their friends to approve, and from which the wise of other Evangelical Churches—yes those who are wise for *themselves*—would earnestly dissuade them. What possible good to Protestant Christendom can they anticipate from forsaking that part of the field of action where danger is greatest and fleeing to that where for the time it is least, but where the war will inevitably overtake them.

We would suppress every uprising of censure, and refrain from language of any sort which might be deemed to surpass the provocation; but that of the prophet presses to find utterance and seizes upon the pen when we tell our brethren that we would lay our body as the ground and as the street to them that pass over, sooner than that you should forsake us in the very midst of such a contest waged before so great a cloud of witnesses, and surrender your inheritance in a direct line from those who to procure it for you suffered unto death. You, with the Evangelical party, are, in the judgment of every observer from without, their true successors. The books are yours, and the moral power of the Church is chiefly with you. Why, then, abandon your position upon the field for an enterprise in which any great success is impossible, and which will probably prove abortive.

If separation is to ensue (as from the recent unprincipled course of the Ritualist party, in England, seems next to certain), let the sins of false doctrine, heresy, and schism all rest upon the same heads, and those who have first corrupted the faith of the Church, be responsible for rending its unity.

Never, apparently, did so much depend upon the wisdom and self-restraint of Evangelical men. With the spirit and genius of the Reformation accorded to them by all parties outside their immediate opponents, as also of the Church, as it stood with scarce a dissenting voice, until the opening of the 17th century, and having subscribed the Articles, *ex animo imponentis*, (and what other party can say this?), they, of all others, can afford to abide patiently in their inheritance, and continue as in times past, to vindicate its Protestant fame, resolved that those who go out of the Church, shall be those that are not of it, and none other.